

Becoming a Zookeeper in Japan as an American: The Process of Obtaining a Job Abroad

An Honors Thesis (HONR 499)

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Abstract

As time passes, businesses, politics, and jobs increasingly incorporate individuals from foreign countries. Studying abroad or working in a foreign country has become quite common now, but the processes to do so have many requirements and procedures to complete. For example, if you wanted to obtain a zoology job in Japan, you would not only have to have typical work qualifications, but also additional documentations such as a visa, and would need to be mentally prepared for differences in the work environment or foreign lifestyle that could affect your success on the job. Therefore, I researched the qualifications and documentations needed to obtain a job at a zoo in Japan, as well as any related information that an individual seeking employment in Japan should know, like cultural, historical, or work differences compared to the United States. I focused on differences centered on a zoo or animal research workplace.

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Process Analysis Statement

Completing the thesis had many ups and downs, with parts that I enjoyed and parts that I struggled with. There were many things that I could have done, or not done, in order to make writing my thesis much easier. But, it was a learning process, and I think that the next time I have to write a thesis, I will be able to do so with greater efficiency and ease.

My thesis began with choosing a research topic. I had no idea what I wanted to do, only that I wanted to do something that involved Japan because of my Japanese minor. Therefore, I scheduled an appointment with Dr. Stedman in order to discuss possible topics. We spoke at length about what I was interested in, and she suggested combining my two interests in life, Japan and zoology. Thus, I decided on the topic of how to become a zookeeper in Japan as an American. With my topic chosen, I completed the thesis proposal and started on my research.

Before I began writing my thesis, I had an interest in interviewing Dr. Christopher Martin who now works for the Indianapolis Zoo in America, but had also worked with animals in Japan in the past. I felt that his perspective on working in Japan would be interesting and unique so I began the process to receive Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval to speak with him, as I was told that it might be considered human research. To quickly sum that process up, it was a long and complicated process because I had no previous experience with the IRB process and, in the end, the IRB told me it was not research. Before I could even see if it was possible to contact the individual that I wanted to interview, I had to have everything approved by the IRB beforehand. That meant that the interview questions, a recruitment letter, consent form, IRB application form, and a human research certification had to be finished and approved before I even knew if the man was interested in speaking with me. While the IRB does have documents available to help you complete these documents, I was still very unsure what they exactly wanted

me to do. So, after having called and spoken with them numerous times over the phone, I finally decided to just go in and meet with a graduate student who could help me in person. This was helpful for me, but I was fortunate that I had already attempted to complete the documents beforehand, so they were able to read what I had and give me suggestions for improvement. Therefore, if you need to do the IRB process and want help, I would recommend that you, at the very least, complete a draft for all of the needed documents so that they can tell you if you are headed in the right direction or not. Also, I should mention that the certification that is needed should be done as soon as possible because it is through an online training course. This was not too hard to do, but it did take some time to complete. Once I finally finished all of the needed documents, I submitted it to be reviewed by the IRB review board. They sent it back and asked for a few corrections. Once I made it more specific, they told me that it was not research, so I did not need IRB approval. After spending months on just this process, I was able to try and contact the individual to interview. What I learned through this process is to either get someone who is extremely experienced with the IRB process to help you from beginning to end or to avoid doing anything that might be considered human research. Also, I found that I could not work on it while I was on break at home because the software needed to open the application form was not on my computer. I originally thought the sample form was faulty, so I tried accessing it multiple times on different internet browsers, but later found out that I needed an Adobe product to access it on my laptop. So, the only place I could work on the IRB stuff was in the BSU library or a computer lab.

To complete the interview, I had to find a way to contact Dr. Martin. Originally I tried calling the zoo that he works at multiple times, trying different departments, etc. When I realized that this was not working, I began trying other methods of contact as well. I searched the internet

for hours trying to find any information, like their phone number or email. There was no information, so I checked Facebook and Twitter to see if I could find him though there. When I couldn't find Dr. Christopher Martin by name, I went to the Indy Zoo social media pages and tried to find him by looking at people they were following, but I could not find him this way either. At this point, I consulted with my advisor because I was not getting anywhere. He suggested emailing a professor, Dr. Dodson, who might be able to help. I emailed him, and he directed me to another professor, Dr. McConnell. I emailed this second professor, but did not receive a response. But after my advisor emailed him, he replied and was very helpful. By using networking contacts, I was able to directly contact the person that I wanted to interview. In conclusion, if you wish to interview someone, social media and other methods of contact may be a good place to start. But if you cannot make contact by yourself or through the internet, then use your network as it is likely that no one, particularly busy organizations, will contact you back otherwise. After getting introduced through a person they knew, it was easy to contact them and complete the interview.

I began gathering sources during my fall semester before I started on the IRB process. Getting certain general information was a simple process. I used the One Search engine through the Ball State library website and Google Scholar. But, whenever I tried to find specific information or documentation information in peer-reviewed literature, I was unable to find much. Therefore, for information on topics such as visa, passport, work permit, Japan zoo salaries, or other documentation, I had to find websites that were reliable as a source. Another aspect that made this process more difficult was the fact that some sources that would have been a great addition to my research were in Japanese. Some academic papers would have the abstract

translated, but the rest of the paper was still in Japanese. I can mostly read Japanese, but my knowledge of vocabulary and kanji is limited, so these sources were basically unusable.

My favorite part of working on the honor's thesis was reading through all of my sources. I found it very interesting to learn about differences between the United States and Japan. Also, as someone who will be working in Japan as an Assistant English Teacher starting this August, I was intrigued to learn the specifics of the many different qualifications and types of documentations that are needed to work in Japan. For example, I had known about things such as visas, but I was not aware of the different types of visas there were or what documentation you needed to apply for one. I also learned that in order to obtain a work visa in Japan, you have to have a four years bachelor's degree or else they will not grant you a work visa. Overall, I learned many new things about my topic, as well as how to tackle large amounts of reading from sources.

In the end, the hardest and most time consuming part about completing my thesis revolved around completing the interview, specifically the IRB process and creating initial contact. After that was done, it went relatively smoothly and was not as frustrating. While I do not like writing papers and though it took a lot of time, I certainly felt less stressed about writing the paper than about other aspects of completing the thesis. And even though I came across many difficult situations, I am glad to have completed my senior thesis. I will admit that about half way through I began to wonder if it was even worth it to graduate with honors. But I do not like to quit things halfway, so I learned that even during my most stressful times, I can pull through and finish what I started. Writing this research paper was a good learning process for me, and I hope that by reading this research paper, others will be able to learn about what is needed to obtain a job in Japan, and about the differences in work lifestyles or in zoos between the United States and Japan.

Introduction

No matter if an individual has recently obtained their high school, associates, bachelor's, or graduate degree after their respective graduation, they will, at some point in life, inevitably find themselves experiencing the daunting process of searching for a full time employment opportunity. Knowing what you will need in the future to obtain a job, like important documents or certifications, previous work experience, and knowledge of a typical lifestyle of your desired job, can be the difference between a successful job hunting process, and failure. In addition to that, because of the globalization of the United States, many people are not only searching for employment in America, but in other foreign countries as well. The already long and stressful experience of job hunting becomes even more complicated. To be a competitive applicant for a job abroad, you must not only meet the actual job requirements, but additional requirements as well, such as knowledge of the country's cultural and social norms, employment laws, and foreign language proficiency skills (Morgan, 2009). Japan is one such country that many non-Japanese individuals consider when looking for a job abroad. In 2013, a total of 717,504 foreigners were working in Japan according to The Japan Times (More foreigners, 2014). Since then, that number has increased substantially to 1.28 million as of October, 2017. This is an 18% increase since the previous year, 2016, and it appears that this growth will not be stopping anytime soon (Kyodo, 2018). Even with this significant growth in foreign employment in recent years, finding a job in Japan is very competitive for foreigners, especially for occupations that are not in the traditional areas that foreigners work, like teaching English or in the IT field (3 Realistic Jobs, 2014). Many additional steps must be completed to be considered for employment in a field such as zoology in Japan. Therefore, for those individuals who aspire to work in the zoology field in Japan, this paper will examine the requirements needed both in the United States

and Japan to travel and work abroad, the general history of Japanese zoos, and the differences between zoos and life in Japan and America.

Documentation and Paperwork

If you have ever been outside of the country, then it should not be surprising that before you are able to work abroad or even apply for some foreign jobs, a lot of documentation is needed. First would be the basic travel requirements: passports, visas, medical clearance, and other forms of identification. Second would be additional documents for working, such as working permits, employment contracts, and any certifications that you have. Passports are important documents that are needed to travel, as the government uses them to track where each U.S. citizen is, especially in cases of national emergencies where American citizens traveling abroad need to be evacuated (Visa and Passport, n.d.). And of course, besides needing a passport to board and fly on an airplane, you will need this document to be able to enter back into the United States. If you already have a passport, then ensure that it will be valid for a minimum of six months after your anticipated return home date (What documents, n.d.). Also, to enter and exit Japan, you will need at least two blank pages in your passport for entry/exit stamps (U.S. Department, 2017). For those who do not have a passport, you should apply for one well in advance of applying for a position abroad because many application forms will request a photocopy of your passport or a copy of a receipt showing that you have purchased one. This is because getting a passport can take a long time, about two months unless you pay additional expensive fees, and most likely, if employers wanted to hire you for a position, they would not want to wait around for your passport to get approved and mailed back to you (Visa and Passport, n.d.). Instead, they will hire someone who has a valid passport already. To obtain a passport you must go to a local State Department Passport Agency, a courthouse, or a post office with these

three documents: a proof of citizenship, like a birth certificate, an identification card, such as a driver's license, and the passport application form that can be found online or at any of the locations listed earlier (Visa and Passport, n.d.). Taking additional forms of identification, like your social security card, is advised just in case they request it from you. The current cost for a passport book is \$110 (U.S. Department, 2017).

Visas are another important document that will be issued by the country that you wish to visit, rather than your home country. There are many different types of visas, and depending on how long you are staying in the country and what you are doing there, you will need a certain one. For working in the zoology field, you will most likely need a work visa or a science/research visa, but the best way to determine which one you will need is to contact your future employer and ask them, and then confirm it with the Japanese department of immigration or with the embassy or consulate (Visa and Passport, n.d.). As an American, you will be able to stay in Japan a maximum of 90 days without a visa, but it is not legal to work in Japan while on this free visa (U.S. Department, 2017). Therefore, if you are already in Japan on a "visa free" entry status, then you will need to depart from Japan before you can change your visa status (U.S. Department, 2017). As it was with the passport, you again might want to consider applying for a visa before you apply for a position because proof of acquirement may be required on the job application form. With all that being said, Japan will not issue a regular working visa unless you have a four year university degree (Richey, 2017). There are a few possible ways to gain employment in Japan that go around this law, but a specialized and non-typical foreigner job like a zookeeper will not be able to obtain a working visa without a degree. And even with a four-year degree, the competition for jobs in Japan is very fierce, so highly skilled individuals will receive preferential treatment when it comes to issuing visas (Tago, 2017).

Japan is a developed country, so there is little to consider as far as medical clearance goes. There are no required vaccinations to travel to Japan; however, checking with the U.S. Center for Disease Control and Prevention for any recommended vaccinations is always a good idea (U.S. Department, 2017). Besides vaccines, you may want to have your medical records accessible when you are applying for a job because employers will want to see that you are healthy enough for the position that they are hiring you for. This includes mental health. As you will encounter stress not only from your job, but also from moving to and experiencing a new life in a foreign country, employers will want to know about any past experiences with depression, anxiety, or other mental health issue. Psychological or psychiatric care can be very difficult to find in Japan, even when you are in a city (U.S. Department, 2017). Another consideration that needs to be taken into account is medication. Certain drugs that are legal in the United States are not legal in Japan. Also, prescriptions written in the United States will not be accepted in Japan. You will need to see a health care provider in Japan if you need this prescription refilled while you are there (U.S. Department, 2017).

Some other forms of identification that you should consider bringing with you while you are abroad, in case of a stolen or lost passport, would be your birth certificate, driver's license, or social security card. However, as it is not always safe to have the actual documents on hand at all times, it is recommended that you make two or three copies of each important document. Two copies will be for you while you are abroad, and one copy should be left in your home country with a family member or friend. This ensures that if you would misplace any of your documents, you would be able to reenter the United States using other forms of identification.

Working permits are slightly different from visa in that a working permit is used to permit an individual to work in a specific country and are granted by a particular company or

organization, while visas are used to allow an individual into a country and are granted by the countries' immigration authorities (Visa and Passport, n.d.). Usually, the working permit will have limitations to it, such as what kind of work you can do and for how long you can be employed. Again, depending on who is employing you, you may only need a visa and not a working permit. To determine if you need one, you should consult with your prospective employer and the embassy or consulate.

After being accepted for a job, it is important to have an employment contract. This contract will lay out the details of your working hours, wages, company rules, benefits like holidays, among other things (Tago, 2017). If no contract is signed, then Japanese officials cannot help you in the case of being misled into work that was not what you believed it to be. It is important to review the entire contract and understand all of its components before you sign it and travel all the way to Japan (U.S. Department, 2017). With that being said, there are still Japanese laws that will protect you from some situations, but checking out the company or organization's reputation you are working for is beneficial to prevent such predicaments.

Lastly, some paperwork that you will want to consider when searching for a job like zoo keeping in Japan would be any certifications or professional license that you have. While having a degree is the basic requirement to obtain a working visa in Japan, additional qualifications will help you towards greater opportunities. For example, if you were to work as a researcher at a zoo, having a training certificate in animal research and behavior will increase your worth as a potential candidate. Even though many certifications will not be valid in Japan, the fact that you have certifications or license means that you have the ability to obtain Japanese certifications. A specific certification that you should consider obtaining before searching for a job in Japan is a language proficiency certification (Richey, 2017). If you have never studied Japanese before, it is

practically impossible for you to obtain a job as a zoo keeper in Japan. While there are plenty of other opportunities in Japan that will not require high Japanese language proficiency, the zoology field typically does. One way to get a certification is by taking the Japanese Language Proficiency Test, or JLPT. This test is administered in 17 different cities across the United States, and is only administered once per year in December (Japanese Language Proficiency, 2018). This test can also be taken in other countries and may have additional tests available in July (Japanese Language Proficiency, 2018). Employers often want at least a JLPT level N2, for professional jobs (Richey, 2017). Level N2 is the second highest level possible to receive, and it indicates that you can understand everyday conversations in a variety of situations. The main reason that this is an important component that employers consider is because they want individuals who will be able to comfortably interact with their Japanese coworkers and will be able to understand Japanese labels and instructions that you would encounter on the job. However, there are always exceptions. If you are doing only research at a zoo and work with a group of foreigners, then you may not need Japanese proficiency because English is normally used in those situations (Spotlight, 2010). Dr. Christopher Martin, a specialist in chimp cognition using technology, spent 9 years in Japan earning his masters and doctorate in biology as well as doing his post-doctorate research, but he said, "I speak a little bit of Japanese [now]... but I am not fluent by any means" (Martin, 2018). Because he studied and worked at the Kyoto University Primate Research Institution, where English was the publicly spoken language, he did not need much language skill, only enough to get by in society. Therefore, because his life revolved around studying and working in a university setting rather than specifically a zoo setting in Japan, he did not need Japanese to be able to excel at his work. However, typically not speaking

Japanese would greatly limit your employment opportunities, so having language skills is crucial for this field.

In the end, the exact documentation that are needed for a zoology field job will vary according to who exactly employs you and how long you intend to stay in Japan. But the documents listed above should be kept in mind when searching for a zoology job in Japan.

Getting the Job in Japan

Aside from the documentations needed to consider working in Japan, having a proper resume, interview expectations, and experience living in Japan should be taken into consideration before applying for a job abroad.

It is common knowledge that a good resume can result in a successful application. But, if you would send a resume meant for jobs in the United States, employers will probably be quick to discard your resume. The reason for this is that resumes meant for Japanese jobs are slightly different than those in the United States, namely that a picture of you should be included on the resume (Richey, 2017). This requirement allows for whoever is hiring employees to match up faces with the information on their respective resumes. And while it may seem weird and unnecessary, it is a vital part that you would not want to leave out. Of course, since the photo goes on your resume, you will want a professional-looking photo from the shoulder up, in clothes that do not show any cleavage. Japan is much more reserved in clothing choices, especially for women, so avoid any low cut tops or shirts that don't cover your shoulders and upper arm for the photo. Wearing professional attire that is consistent with Japanese standards is better than appearing too casual in the photo.

Once the initial resume has been approved, the next step to obtaining a job in Japan would be the interview process. According to Peter Lackner, the president of the site Jobs in

Japan, the first 30 seconds in the interview are crucial because interviewers will be looking for certain errors that will result in your failure, such as slouching, inappropriate attire, and not making eye contact (Richey, 2017). Some other mistakes to keep in mind would be showing up to the interview late or too early, complaining, being rude to the receptionist, and being “lazy” or too firm in your handshake. It is important to make a good first impression. Also, if you are in Japan and the interview is conducted there, then be prepared for the possibility that the interview location may be at a restaurant. Typically this would involve your potential colleagues and bosses enjoying a meal and getting to know you before they begin interviewing you there (Morgan, 2009). Also, some interviews may be conducted through Skype, but you should still remember to treat it as an actual interview. You should wear professional clothing and still follow basic interview etiquette: keep good posture, don’t eat or drink during the Skype interview, and speak in a professional manner (Richey, 2017). Basically you should act as you would if you were doing the interview in person, and don’t get too comfortable or casual, which can make you seem lazy or disinterested. The actual interview questions will vary, but researching the company or group you are interviewing for and knowing why you want to work there can determine your success or failure. If you indicated that you know some Japanese on your job application, expect a part of your interview to be conducted in Japanese, because even if you are lucky enough to work for a zoo that has many people who speak English, they will want to determine if you have at least enough Japanese language skills to get by in Japan. If you have a JLPT level 2, the entire interview may be in Japanese, so be prepared.

Something else to consider if you are thinking about applying for a zoology job, such as working as a zookeeper or as an animal research assistant, in Japan in the future, is to obtain actual experience living in Japan. Whether that is through studying abroad or obtaining a job that

is targeted towards foreigners in Japan, like teaching English, is up to the individual to decide, but either experience will give you an additional competitive edge to your resume. After all, employers would not want to hire an overseas individual and spend a lot of money and time recruiting, bringing them to Japan, and then training them, only to have that individual realize that they cannot adapt to life in Japan, and move back to the United States (Richey, 2017). Instead, if you have previous experience in Japan, at the very least, that shows that you can adapt to the environment and you probably know enough Japanese to function in society, thus making you a safer choice than individuals who have no experience abroad.

Another reason to spend actual time in Japan is for networking purposes. Like I have stated previously, jobs in Japan that are not targeting foreign workers will be difficult to obtain because they are likely to simply just hire Japanese people to fill their positions. However, if you have connections with people in Japan, finding job openings become a much more realistic possibility. If you attend graduate school in Japan, then you can network with professors, other students, and any guest lecturers that come to the university, as well as gain valuable experience doing research in a foreign country. If you work in Japan, you will have an abundance of opportunities to network because of a unique aspect of Japanese culture: after work drinking parties. Basically, this consists of coworkers and your bosses going out to a restaurant or bar to drink in a situation where hierarchy is not as strict and you can socialize more freely. Often, other professional groups will attend these events, and some workplaces may make it an unspoken requirement for you to attend these events (Richey, 2017). If you don't have the opportunity to spend time in Japan, then networking through your home college is one way to go because you will most likely be able to make global connections using college services, professors, or sites like LinkedIn (Morgan, 2009).

What to Expect on and off the Job in Japan

The duties of zoo keepers in Japan are quite similar to those in America. They are expected to feed, groom, exercise, and train the animals they are assigned to, as well as be able to do manual labor like carrying heavy feed bags or cleaning and possibly repairing enclosures (ERI Economic Research Institute, n.d.). These activities can be quite strenuous at times, as you are expected to be able to complete them regardless of the weather (Open Colleges, n.d.). And, you should be able to keep detailed records of all the information of the animals that you are caring for (ERI Economic Research Institute, n.d.). As a zoo keeper, you also must be able to communicate effectively as you may be assigned to lead private tours about the animals in your care, or give a public presentation in front of your animal's exhibit to teach the public about the species (ERI Economic Research Institute, n.d.). This is where you would need to have a high level of Japanese skills so that you can answer questions effectively. However, if you are employed by a zoo to do animal research, your duties may be to study the animal's behavior or take blood samples for testing. Your respective duties can vary greatly depending on what your exact role is in the zoo. But whether you work as a zookeeper or a researcher, you need your skill sets to be well rounded, a jack-of-all-trades of a sort, and not expect to only be working on one focused skill. "In Japan, there is more of a philosophy of being able to do everything yourself. If there is a project or something that requires multiple aspects to it, in Japan, you are more likely to be expected to fulfill all of those duties [than in America]. A good example would be that in America, you might have a lab where one person does collection, one person is really good at statistics, and another person is really good at writing, so everyone kind of collaborates on the study. In Japan you are expected to do everything yourself" (Martin, 2018).

With regards to pay, a zoo keeper in Japan makes an average base salary of 3,139,093 yen (\$29,476), with the hourly rate being 1,509 yen (\$14) and an average yearly bonus of 49,284 yen (\$463) (ERI Economic Research Institute, n.d). If you have less than three years of working experience as a zoo keeper, then you will more likely have a salary of 2,432,998 yen (\$22,846) which is the average entry level salary in Japan for zoo keepers (ERI Economic Research Institute, n.d). Keep in mind that, in general, women in Japan have a lower average wage rate and job prestige compared to men (Brinton, 1988).

Japan has been known to have extreme overtime hours in many professions. While a 40-hour week is the written law for non-overtime hours, there is technically no legal limit to the amount of overtime work that can be completed (Tago, 2017). Between 2002 and 2005, about 300 incidents of brain and heart disease were reported as a result of overwork, and 6.39 million individuals worked 60 plus hours per week during the years of 2000 and 2004 (Iwasaki, 2006). In fact, this is such a prevalent issue that they have a specific word for when overwork leads to health issues, *karoshi*, which more directly translates to *death from overwork*. Dr. Marin commented that in Japan, you could be at the lab at any time of the day, and people were there at all times of the day. "People don't go home at night. You work from 8 in the morning until 10 at night. You might go home for a meal... a lot of times people will take naps there at their desks... The important thing is that you are there [at work], from a cultural standpoint." (Martin, 2018) With that being said, there are Labor Standard Laws that are put in place to hopefully moderate the amount of overtime work. Thus, standard overtime work limits are 15 hours for one week, 45 hours for one month, and 360 hours per year (Tago, 2017). Additionally, you are entitled to a 25% base pay increase for below 60 hours of overtime in a month, and a 50% base pay increase for any overtime work above 60 hours per month (Tago, 2017). So if you are aspiring to earn lots

of money, then maybe working long hours of overtime is worth it for a short time. But this is one of the reasons that having a written contract agreement between yourself and an employer is so important when you obtain a job in Japan. Without one, you may end up working far more hours than you anticipated.

Even with a high possibility of overtime, there are benefits to working in Japan. In the United States, there is no guarantee that you will receive paid vacation time (Ray, 2007). This leads to 25% of Americans having no paid vacation or holiday (Ray, 2007). In Japan, however, workers who have attended a minimum of 80% of the working days for six months are required to have 10 days of paid leave each year (Tago, 2017). The number of paid days off increases over time, with a right to 20 days off after 6.5 years of continuous employment (Tago, 2017). Another benefit is that there is more freedom over your work or research projects, as employers in Japan let you work more independently because they expect you to be able to do all aspects of the job yourself (Martin, 2018).

Gender disparities in work are something to keep in mind before accepting and working in a job in Japan. While gender disparities are getting better, there are still additional challenges for women working in Japan, particularly in the science field (Larivière, 2013). Since science is a male-dominated field, some employers are more reluctant to hire women because there are no female *senpais* to help instruct and guide newly employed women (Brinton, 1988). A *sempai-kohai* hierarchy system, or a senior employee and a junior/younger employee relationship, is an irreplaceable aspect of work. Men are then usually paired with younger men, and a woman with another younger woman, in effect, taking them “under their wing”. Therefore, if a female employee is hired in an all-male employed group, the men may feel awkward or unqualified to guide a woman personally, resulting in a greater possibility of women not being hired (Brinton,

1988). Another disparity in science in Japan is that women working on a collaborative research paper are less likely to be listed as the first author on the paper, and are less likely than men to even participate in collaborative publications (Larivière, 2013). In the United States, male dominated authorship of publications are also true for some states, but not all, and is still at a lower degree than Japan (Larivière, 2013). Another aspect of life that affects the disparities: marriage. Japan has a pronounced “double-peak” age pattern for women who are working in the labor force. This results from women leaving their jobs after marriage, until their children are at an age to enter school, whereupon they reenter the work force (Brinton, 1988). This makes some employers see women as a risky investment because they don’t want to hire, train, and spend time and money only to have the woman leave work because of marriage or pregnancy (Brinton, 1988). Most women in Japan must then contemplate between meeting social expectations of being married by a certain age and receiving higher pay, as Japan is the only industrialized country with non-married women having a higher wage-rate than married women (Brinton, 1988). As an American, you may not be as affected by this, but if you plan on staying for longer term, then you will most likely experience some slight pressure to be married. After all, women who get married between 23 and 27 are considered to have married “on schedule” in Japan, while women who are not married by that time tend to be questioned on why they are not married yet by parents and colleagues (Brinton, 1988).

History of Japanese Zoos

Before analyzing at the differences between zoos in Japan and zoos in the United States, a brief history of Japanese zoos is needed to fully understand why certain aspects of Japanese zoos are the way they are. Before the time when Japan had what we would now consider a modern zoo, animal collections and exhibitions were common practice to entertain rulers and

upper class citizens in Japan. And, some of these exhibitions of exotic animals were located on the side of a road, where onlookers would pay a fee to marvel at animals such as tigers that were kept in small cages (Kisling, 2001). The collecting and display of exotic animals dates back to the 1600s and were usually privately owned (Kisling, 2001; Miller, 2013). Sometimes, an animal tea house would be established, in which paying customer would sit on chairs in a yard to drink tea and observe both native and exotic animals that were in enclosures (Kisling, 2001). It wasn't until 1882, that the first zoo in Japan was established: Ueno Zoo (Tokyo Zoo Net, n.d.). This zoo, that still operates today, was located in what is now Tokyo, Japan. Soon, the second zoo in Japan opened up in Kyoto, and more followed after that (Kisling, 2001). These zoos became widely popular for all ages as a source of curiosity and entertainment. However, that popularity would not last.

In the late 1930's, when Japan was at war with China, zoos began to accumulate issues such as food and staff shortages. And when WWII began, the old shortages became worse and new shortages arose. Attendance rates plummeted. In 1942, Ueno zoo had more than three million visitors, but by 1944, that rate amounted to only about 360,000 people (Kisling, 2001). Instead of zoos being thought of as fun entertainment sites, civilians that were struggling to survive each day began thinking of zoos as a frivolous and unnecessary existence. Another shortage resulted from the military's need of metal to make weapons and other war materials, so enclosures and guardrails made of metal were impossible to make or repair (Kisling, 2001). Previously popular animals had to be killed due to upkeep expenses or because of the possibility that an aerial bombing could result in cages being damaged, thus releasing dangerous animals (Miller, 2013). However, ammunition was rarely used to put down animals as it was too valuable to be wasted. Instead, many were left to starve to death, were poisoned, or even strangled by

ropes (Kisling, 2001). By the time the war ended, few exotic species were still alive, and only 12 zoos were able to operate in 1949, four years after the war (Kisling, 2001).

By 1949, the U.S., who was occupying Japan, allowed the importation of much needed new animals (Miller, 2013). Shortly after the war, most zoos only had native or farm animals, which did not attract customers, so zoos could not earn money to purchase new species. But, after importations were allowed again, certain governments presented animals to Japan, such as the elephants that were given to Japan from the India and Thailand governments (Miller, 2013). By 1952, a majority of the zoos were revitalized and zoo attendance soared (Kisling, 2001). Zoos began to flourish, and more zoos were constructed. Within a 10 year period between 1950 and 1960, over 30 new zoos were constructed.

Differences between U.S. and Japanese zoos

Zoo sizes will vary greatly in both the U.S. and in Japan, normally based on their location and time in which they were built. But besides just acreage when comparing sizes, the number of species should also be considered. In the U.S. one of the largest zoos by size is the Columbus Zoo and Aquarium, which spans 234 hectare. It has 793 different species, and the total number of specimen is 6300 animals (World Associations, 2018). This humongous size, however, is not common. The Fort Wayne Children's Zoo is 15 hectare with 253 species and 2462 total specimens. And, the Indianapolis Zoo has 26 hectare, 348 species, and 2980 total animals (World Associations, 2018). Most zoos in the U.S. are around this size. In Japan, Tama zoo is considered to be relatively large, but not the largest (Kisling, 2001). Spanning 52.3 hectare, there are 180 different species in the Tama Zoo, and a total of 2025 animals. The Ueno Zoo has 14.1 hectare with 366 species and 2524 specimen (World Associations, 2018). Most of the older zoos in Japan, like Ueno, are very small in comparison to some of the more recently built zoos, like

Tama zoo, because more land was set aside for zoos as more time passed and they became more popular (Kisling, 2001). Overall, due to limitations in available land, zoos in Japan are typically smaller on average than in the United States, but size does vary greatly in both.

One major difference that you will find between zoos in the United States and zoos in Japan is the types of species that are in their exhibits. Of course, typical crowd favorites like lions, giraffes, elephants, or chimpanzees are present in most zoos of Japan. But in addition to those, you are going to encounter species that are unique or native to Japan. For example, when Dr. Martin worked in Japan, even though his research revolved around studying memory cognition in chimpanzees, he also completed some initial training courses that involved activities like drawing blood from or catching Japanese macaques with butterfly nets (Martin, 2018). This species was not his focus of study, but because he was in Japan, he completed training with a species that was native to Japan. The same situation is found in zoos. The Tama Zoological Park in Hino City, Japan, has a section of the zoo strictly for Asian animals, which includes Japanese sika deer (*Cervus nippon*), the Yezo or Ussuri brown bear (*Ursus arctos lasiotus*), Japanese macaques (*Macaca fuscata*), among other species (Tokyo Zoo Net, n.d.). The Inokashira Park Zoo also has many Japanese species such as raccoon dogs (*Nyctereutes procyonoides*), red-crowned cranes (*Grus japonensis*), and the Japanese marten (*Martes melampus*) (Tokyo Zoo Net, n.d.). Just as the United States has species in their zoos that are found commonly in certain parts of the U.S., Japan also has species that are common there. So as an American, you will encounter species that you have never seen or heard of before.

Aside from Japanese animals, many zoos in Japan have uniquely Japanese architectural or artistic structures. In Ueno Zoo, there is a five-story pagoda that was originally built in 1631 in the park (Tokyo Zoo Net, n.d.). Such a building would not be found in a zoo in the United

States. Also, Ueno has a tea ceremony house, which demonstrates a part of Japanese culture. And it is not the only zoo to display Japanese culture within the zoo. Inokashira Park Zoo has the Seibo Kitamura Museum, who was a Japanese sculptor, and has a Doshinkyo, which is a traditional Japanese house (Tokyo Zoo Net, n.d.).

The public opinion of zoos in Japan varies from that in the United States. In Japan, zoos are considered more of an entertainment source rather than for conservation efforts. For most of the public, the current exhibits meet their desire to have a place that showcases animals which cannot be found in Japan (Kisling, 2001). And zoo directors typically are not in it for animal conservation, as many have no experience in the zoology or biology field (Kisling, 2001). But there have been more animal activist movements in recent years. When 160 Japanese macaques from zoos were sold to animal research institutes, there was an outcry from the public because they did not believe it was right to sell animals from zoos, especially not to places that will do animal research on the monkeys (Saegusa, 1998). Another movement revolves around the Taiji dolphin and whale hunt. This annual event includes wild aquatic animals being driven into small coves, with people waiting in boats with nets to capture or kill the trapped animals. Zoos in Japan had bought numerous dolphins from these hunts in the past, but after activists strongly protested against the hunt, the Japanese Association of Zoos and Aquariums (JAZA) decided to stop purchasing animals caught during the Taiji hunt (King, 2015).

Conclusion

When considering working abroad, there are many additional things to think about before seeking and accepting work in a foreign country, even a developed country like Japan. You will need a lot more documentation, and will have to spend money before you even know if you can get the job on things like passports and visas. The steps taken to get a job are even slightly

modified from how they are in America. Resumes need a photo, formal interviews may be conducted in informal settings, and you may need to get a different job than the one you ultimately aspire for to gain connections and living experience in Japan. It is also imperative that any individual planning to work abroad learns the workplace differences that result from that country's cultural or historical background. Most jobs in Japan have long overtime hours, and discrimination is still quite prevalent towards women. Lastly, you should consider how zoos are different from those in the United States. Since you are in Japan, you will most likely be working with species that are native to Japan, so you will have to be motivated to learn about completely new species. If the reason you wish to work in the zoology field is to contribute towards conservation efforts, then you may not enjoy working for a zoo in Japan. Of course, each zoo is different, which is why I would conclude that if you wish to obtain a zoology job in Japan, the most important thing to do is research every aspect that will be a part of your new life.

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